

MANAGING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF REGIONS

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Abstract:

Competitiveness of regions depends on the establishment of public administration and the forms of governance. Of great importance is the tendency to cooperation and social responsibility of both the public authorities and entrepreneurs. To implement tasks facing public administration in modern economies, it becomes necessary to combine the administration within the meaning of traditional active management, which is a professional directing oriented at adapting to changes in the environment, but also distribution and efficient use of resources. Only such management is strategic and enables optimal management of resources affecting local and regional economic development. Member countries of the European Union, including Poland, should implement new methods of management in their administrations. Although many Polish government at various levels are already implementing both traditional and modern forms of governance, the current activities in this field are still unsatisfactory and do not lead to a substantial improvement in the public sector in Poland.

Keywords: management, region, competitiveness, public, authorities.

1.Introduction

When studying economics, a conclusion may be derived that management applies mostly to private entities and profit-driven organizations. Management is defined as the influence of the managing entity on the resources under its control in order to realize the objectives of the organization while maintaining the principle of economic rationality. The reference to private entities bases on the assumption that independent and rational economic decisions are possible only in the case of private property. However, in recent years, the management of public sector has been more and more in the focus of the science of economics. According to P. F. Drucker (2009) the not profit-oriented public sector will be the major growth area in the twenty-first century. Also in other

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modern organizations management will play an increasingly important role, at least because, for example, non-profit organizations and government agencies are generally less flexible than enterprises.

The increase of the importance of public sector reflects its incrementing spending but also the qualitative and structural changes it is undergoing. Today it functions similarly to the private sector, striving to achieve its own objectives in a rational way. The efficient implementation of these goals requires efficient management (Kozuch, 2004). On the other hand, changes in the modern world such as the development of civil society, an increase in the level of education and democratization evoke social pressure to increase the efficiency of public spending. Along with that the role of public administration at both central and local level has also been changing. Many countries stand up to the challenges of decentralization of public affairs and the use of the market mechanism in the process of satisfying social needs. The government is gradually moving from administration to management. This process is most advanced in the Anglo-Saxon countries (Kosiedowski, 2008).

The principle of the social market economy is laid down in Constitution of the Polish Republic, which presupposes the existence of regulators of economic processes, whose task is the realization of social needs. These regulators are created by the state. It can affect the elements of the market mechanism and complement them. These tasks can be executed at the central, as well as regional and local level through local and regional governments. The Law on Regional Government highlights realizing development policy of provinces and shaping their development strategies in a way that takes into account, among others, objectives such as boosting economic activity and increasing innovation and competitiveness of provinces (Osiniński, 2008). Also the principle of decentralization of administrative system, which is provided in the Constitution, grants a special role in public management to municipal, county and provincial authorities. In order to be able to perform the steering functions the model of local government must respond to the current conditions, social needs and expectations directed at public authorities. Therefore it becomes necessary to modify the model of public management in a way that will optimize the activities of local government, through, among others, the adaptation of methods and forms of work as well as an adaptation of organizational structures (Lutrzykowski, 2010).

From the perspective of modern economies, ensuring the proper conditions for constant improvement of the competitiveness of regions is becoming more and more crucial. The author concentrates on the modern management in the public sector and on region's development planning in the context of ensuring the right conditions for the improving its competitiveness. She also attempts

to show the influence of public sector management on the competitiveness of the local economy.

2. Modern management in public institutions

Specialist literature does not give a clear definition of public management. The subject of public management is often portrayed as management in the public sector or public administration. The public sector includes government, municipal associations, regional boards, public companies and the organizations created by these entities. Public affairs are classified as finance and public safety, health, education, culture and infrastructure business. As opposed to business management, the following aspects are important characteristics in public management:

- realization of management by public bodies, local authorities,
- in the public sector management we are dealing with a number of institutions rather than a single organization. The objectives of these institutions do not have to be compatible with each other and contribute to the success of the whole system,
- the right to manage does not result from the property, but from the power of state and local authorities,
- the management of the public sector is always about the good of society,
- public institutions cannot be assessed on their earnings or market value,
- objectives of political organizations and social policies are of great importance in public management,
- the realization of tasks is entrusted by administrative acts,
- the activities are regulated by administrative law (Lissowski, 2009).

An interesting example of a subject of public sector management which involves the participation of international, national and regional administrations, public and private entities as well as non-governmental organizations, is the European Union.

As a network of institutions, rules and decisions that are to pursue their goals, it is a multi-level and multi-purpose structure. It is hard to find in the contemporary world any other such system or structure which would correspond to the model of the European Union (Mendza-Drozd, 2010). From the point of view of management it is a very complex system, which should adapt to the changing international environment and economic competition. It should adapt its policies to the long-term challenges, but also effectively respond to changes and emerging crises. Many observers consider the EU system as the system with many performance problems, and are concerned with effectiveness of decision making and its democratic legitimacy (Eberlein and

Kerwer, 2004). In response to these challenges, new methods are introduced, also called modes of governance. Particularly important are the New Modes of Governance of European Union. These include a variety of processes and institutions such as the open method of coordination, voluntary agreements, regulatory agencies, networks, management by informing, competition and informal agreements. It is assumed that New Modes of Governance have one of the following characteristics:

- they introduce social participation (such as social dialogue and social pacts) into public tasks,
- they lead to greater transparency and openness of the administration and a better flow of information between citizens and the administration, for example by publishing regular reports of the local authorities,
- they move away from prescriptive instruments to incentive activities and encourage voluntary cooperation,
- instead of vertical relationships they introduce horizontal cooperation such as horizontal networks and the creation of task forces.

New Modes of Governance are opposed to the traditional top-down and command-and-inspection methods of conducting public policy. They are implemented in the economy especially when there is a public-private partnership and in the managing bodies of administration in areas such as employment policy, sustainable development and social inclusion (Kolarska-Bobińska, 2009). European Governance - A White Paper elaborated and published by the European Commission (2001) refers to New Modes of Governance in general, in a more detailed way - numerous policy papers.

Also in the traditional public institutions in many countries around the world modern management concepts are introduced. Among the current trends of modern management concepts the following can be also distinguished: New Public Management (NPM), which plays a special role in countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Great Britain, Sweden, Canada, Finland, Germany and Reinventing Government dominant mainly in the United States. NPM represents four essential aspects of public sector management: managing as administration, management of the public sector as a business management, as following a policy and as managing people (Krynicka, 2006). The main goal of NPM is an improved thriftiness, efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector and an increase in the quality of its services. These aims are pursued, among others, through the following actions: result orientation, the use of strategic planning, building market relationships and competition in the provision of services, customer orientation, the separation of public policy from operational management and the introduction of measurers and service standards (Rajca, 2009). Central and local administrations in many

countries are reforming their public service according to these concepts. The essence of those concepts can be described as an attempt to ensure that the public administration has acted in a situation cross political competition and in competition with private entities.

New Zealand is the flagship model of changes in the public sector with the use of the NPM theory. The public sector management system is based on the following principles: clear-cut goals and tasks for managers, their freedom in resource allocation and power to take decisions, the accountability of managers, proper estimation of the work effects and an effective information flow in public sector which allows for an evaluation of the people as well as their work. It is a task-based model leading to an increase in efficiency. The managers play a crucial role in it. What is very important for the functioning of the system is a differentiation between the production of goods and services supplied by the public sector departments and their results, understood as the consequences for the society. Departments over there are differentiated from the government. What is also essential is the distinction of the roles of the state as the buyer of goods and services on one hand and their owner on the other. High fiscal policy transparency standards are crucial for the functioning of the whole system (Piwowarski, 2011).

The effects of the reforms initiated by the NPM are very visible also in the United Kingdom. The changes commenced at the beginning of the 80s of the 20th century evolved throughout the years. Their main areas include compulsory competitive tendering, the transfer of local authority functions to quasi-non-governmental organizations, Best-Value principle (the best quality at given costs) and Comprehensive Performance Assessments through a set of Performance Indicators. The beginning of the 21st century is related to the shift of the idea of management to local governance and multi-level governance (Rajca, 2009). In the recent years the importance of information technology-centered changes in public sector management has been growing and „digital era-governance” has been gaining popularity (Dunleavy, Margetts, Bastow and Tinkler, 2005).

In Poland, it seems appropriate to combine these concepts. Still, the country specifics needs to be considered as well. In particular, it seems important to reduce costs of this sector, shift the weight of benefits for certain services to the private sector, flatten structures, increase the role of teamwork and training for managers, as well as focus on the quality of services and the implementation of modern management concepts (Opolski and Modzelewski, 2009). Currently, traditional methods such as strategic management and quality management are used. Also modern methods such as benchmarking, outsourcing, the concept of learning organization and time based management are being introduced (Niedziółka, 2010).

In the context of raising the competitiveness of regions, the concept of multi-level governance or integrated management has been recently gaining more and more importance. It denotes such management of the public sector which consists in integrating the various market actors operating in many areas and at different levels, to realize common tasks in contact with the public administration. It occurs when conventional forms of control seem to be insufficient in relation to the new requirements such as: modernizing public administration, social control and development funds (Województwo Dolnośląskie, 2010). An integrated approach means combining activities in various sectors and at various levels of government to coordinate better the tasks at various levels of management. In place of the administrative units functional units are created, in which the partners are the government and all levels of public administration as well as non-governmental organizations, education institutions and business representatives. Thanks to that the realized subject-based development policy allows for better use of public funds (Ministry of Regional Development, 2011).

Another important aspect of public management is the introduction of quality management systems such as Total Quality Management (Lissowski, 2009). In the context of Polish presence in the structures of the European Union and the standards applicable in this organization it is necessary to launch the processes of high quality public services. From the point of view of local governments the need to care about their image and increasing the investment attractiveness should be an incentive to implement quality management systems. With better management it is easier to gain the support of structural funds of the European Union. Moreover, a better cooperation with institutional client can greatly improve the cooperation related to the projects realized in public-private partnership.

The topic of quality of public services is very complex. Professional literature distinguishes three of its levels: the level of macro, mezo and micro, which determine the quality of governance in the public sector. Macro level (decision-making bodies), the level at which changes in the functioning of public administration are implemented. This is also the quality of legislation. Mezo level is the management of the institution which can take decisions leading to the improved quality of services. Micro level is the level of employees in direct contact with customers (Opolski and Modzelewski, 2009). In summary, it can be stated that the quality of services in local government bodies include: standards of service, effectiveness, maximum results with minimal effort, the timely provision of services, meeting the needs of citizens and to gain public confidence (Wodecka-Hyjek, 2013).

All the mentioned management aspects play an important role in creating the local authorities' capability to compete and in building the competitiveness of regions.

3. Competitiveness of regions

Taking into account the mutual interaction between the region and production systems operating in it, the competitiveness of regions can be defined in two main ways: from the point of view of the public authorities and the business entities. From the point of view of the public authorities competitiveness of the region is its ability to produce sustainable growth of regional prosperity and growing standard of living for its inhabitants which is based on:

- Optimal use of the internal and external resources and the management of the regional economy,
- Building the attractiveness of the region for local entrepreneurs, external investors and residents,
- Adapting to current development trends. Competitiveness of the region is its ability to effectively compete with other regions.

From the business perspective competitiveness of the region means the ability of the companies located there to produce goods and services meeting the needs of the markets, to maintain high employment and profitability, thereby creating a permanent basis for a higher standard of living for its population.

Taking into account the regional policy it seems appropriate to combine both points of view and understand the competitiveness of the region, both as an advantage for the companies due to the presence in the region, as well as the ability for local authorities to compete effectively (Przygodzki, 2012).

The concept of competitiveness of the region includes its investment attractiveness representing the advantages of location in this region. From the point of view of economic and social factors particularly important are: the links between entities, business environment, social environment, the quality of the labor market and the activity of local authorities in this regard.

Primary determinant of competitiveness is innovation, and the primary medium of innovation are business enterprises. From the point of view of locational advantages and competitiveness of regions, local innovation systems and merging companies into clusters and economic networks are gaining more and more importance (Skawińska and Zalewski, 2009).

According to Porter a competitive region is a region that has matured 'diamonds', industry clusters capable of international competition, an appropriately high level of productivity, and thus an attractive location offer from the viewpoint of entrepreneurs and investors.

The experience of developed countries shows clear evidence of a network-specific character of modern growing businesses, whose main strength is the regionalization of innovation capabilities. Modern trends in the development of innovative systems indicate the need to build strong, competitive regions, and the essence for supporting innovative economy are networks forming regional innovation systems. These are the regional socio-economic systems with wide connections being able to use local resources of production processes, products and services in accordance with the specificity of the region or sub-region. These links are related to public authorities and systems of education, finance, universities, research, development and industry sectors. They are based on a strong network connections and the existence of innovative environment. The actions of individual subsystems composing them are connected through the policy of innovation of regional and local authorities. The regional innovation systems include:

- manufacturing and service subsystem - these are the companies implementing new solutions,
- scientific research subsystem - it consists of institutions of research and development responsible for technology transfer,
- institutional subsystem - these are the business environment institutions supporting innovation processes,
- financial subsystem - these are financial entities assisting in the transfer of new technologies to the business,
- socio-cultural subsystem - these are the cultural and structural characteristics of a given region or sub region.

Regional innovation systems thus form a unique public-private forum for cooperation between all the actors of the region or sub region making better use of local resources and factors of economic growth. Functioning within the system reduces the risk and lowers the costs of innovation, increases the ability of knowledge commercialization, facilitates the flow of knowledge and experience contributing to the competitiveness of the region (Gaczek, 2009).

4. The impact of public management on the competitiveness of the regional economy.

The regional economy is a huge collection of diverse entities, grouped according to certain rules, however, it is also the totality of relationships formed between them. These relationships are managed by the various decision-making centers, which are not always located in the given region. Local government is, therefore, a very important entity of management in the region but not the only one. Thus, one cannot talk about the management of the region in the traditional sense, in analogy to corporate management. Local government acts as a management entity only in the relation to the local government sector.

However, regional government is a host in a given territory and, as a host, it should be active in the relation to other elements of the regional economy. One cannot manage them, but these elements should be supported by creating a friendly environment for entrepreneurship. Local government should be the coordinator and the impeller of regional development, as well as the most important entity which manages the process of change in the region. It should plan and organize the implementation of these changes, convince others to them and monitor the implementation of the established objectives and tasks. In the context of these functions the term “management of regional development” in relation to the regional government is justified (Kosiedowski, 2008).

Development and competitiveness of the local economy is dependent on the activities of public administration. The factor that indicates effectiveness of local government in the economic sphere is entrepreneurship, which requires support: creating optimal conditions for doing business, developing civic attitudes and providing incentives for economic activity. The tasks that local governments should pursue in this area can be divided into:

- undertaking initiatives for local development,
- stimulating development through a system of facilities and amenities,
- identifying local needs and resources,
- promotional and organizational activities,
- public aid activities,
- creation and development of economic infrastructure,
- creation of favorable financial conditions,
- attracting investors,
- creating local education system.

In addition, the role of local governments is to incorporate growing companies in the local development in such a way that it is possible to support the process of their development and to use this process as an impulse for economic activation of the local government. A policy which supports this goal is based on development strategies and operations leading to creation of economic clusters and networks.

Supporting the development of clusters, whose functioning is based on regional and local conditions, is now considered as a priority task of the public authorities, which is used to enhance innovation and competitiveness of the regional and local economy. The presence of clusters is associated with many positive phenomena that affect not only the companies involved in cluster structures, but also the local economy. These are phenomena such as specialization of the region, accelerating the transfer of knowledge, building a local culture of innovation, greater availability of financial resources, the creation of an attractive labor market, concentration and development of

resources, improvement of the region image, development of the services sector and the science base as well as increased investment attractiveness of the region (Kogut-Jaworska, 2011).

More and more important from the point of view of efficient competition of small and medium-sized businesses is the quality of the business environment. Cooperation between enterprises becomes an instrument which enables us to remain on the market and effectively compete. Cooperation of companies and inclusion in the network structure enhances the learning processes, building public-private partnerships, expansion in the operation area that is enlarged by networks, sharing risks associated with innovation and strengthens the clout on the market in situations that may overwhelm the abilities of one company.

The inclusion in the cooperation within the network, cooperation with the business environment and functioning in organized surroundings can be comparable in terms of benefits to the functioning of large companies and outputs which are produced by them. These effects are associated with a particular territory and provide additional benefits of competitive advantage by accelerating the development of the region (Przygodzki, 2012).

5. Planning the development in the region

Regional development planning is the process of preparing local and regional development, assignment of tasks, their execution, coordination, evaluation of progress, current intervention and corrections. Planning is thus a complex, autonomous process which covers all phases of development, from idea to evaluation of results, where the timeframes play an important role. This process can be divided into the following steps:

- strategic analysis of the current state,
- forecasting changes,
- development of a strategic vision,
- preparation of a development strategy,
- detailing of the tasks,
- preparation of the investment plan and financial strategy.

The strategy should be assessed by the degree of addressing social needs, efficient use of resources, its functional character, the openness for development and the possible negative consequences of its implementation. The difficulties of strategic planning are related to the complexity of local and regional problems, the lack of relevant information and financial constraints (Szewczuk, 2011).

To plan development in the region it is necessary to analyze and diagnose the socio-economic situation and identify factors affecting the development of the region. The development of the region and its competitiveness lies

in several factors of endogenous origin. In recent times, the role of the so-called resource agents such as natural resources has been decreasing, giving place to the qualitative factors. These include: qualifications of employees, administrative efficiency, diversification of the economic structure, quality and efficiency of transport and communication infrastructure as well as living conditions, and image of the area. It should be expected that the importance of factors such as: institutional conditions, the quality of the functioning of public authorities, the way the region is managed, the scientific and research base, accessibility and environmental conditions will continue to increase (Ministry of Regional Development, 2009). In addition to that the development of the region is affected by a number of the so-called exogenous factors, coming from outside of the region, such as economic conditions, political situation, the competitiveness of the neighboring regions, taxes, state spending on research and development and sectorial policies.

In the context of factors influencing the development of a region it can be compared to the functioning of a production system. Seemingly it is situated in a specific environment. This environment affects the functioning of the system and at the same time the system influences the environment. It is assumed that the environment of a production system has a two-level structure. The first-level environment is the enterprise itself and the second-level environment is the economy of the country or region in which the enterprise is located. The organization of a production system is affected by such first-level environmental factors as for example: lower-level and executive staff, research and development activities run in the area of the production system, the level of technical advancement, the way sales is organized, post-sales service, marketing, materials management, financial resources, methods and forms of administration, for example quality management etc. Second-level environmental factors affecting a production system include first of all: the technical level, advancement, modernity and quality level of the machinery and the production processes. The technical level is also determined by the capabilities to create modern production facilities. This is affected by a series of diversified factors for example the banking system, domestic and international competition, the economic conditions of the country, governmental regulations, socio-political environment, natural environment, methods and forms of management and controlling of production by the country and regional authorities (Durlík, 2007).

6. Conclusion

Competitiveness of regions depends on the entrepreneurship of public administration and applied methods of management. Of great importance is the attitude towards cooperation and social responsibility of both the public authorities and entrepreneurs. To make it possible to implement tasks assigned to public administration in modern economies, it becomes necessary to combine the administration within the traditional meaning with active management, which is a professional operating oriented on adapting to changes in the environment, but also with distribution and efficient use of resources. Management is strategic and enables optimal resource allocation only when it affects local and regional economic development.

Member countries of the European Union, including Poland, should implement the New Management Methods in their public administrations. Although many Polish authorities at different levels already implement the modern management methods along with the traditional ones, the activities undertaken so far in this regards are not sufficient and have not resulted in a significant improvement in the functioning of the public sector in Poland.

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